

# British Columbia Organic Grower

 FUTURE OF ORGANIC:  
Organic Integrity

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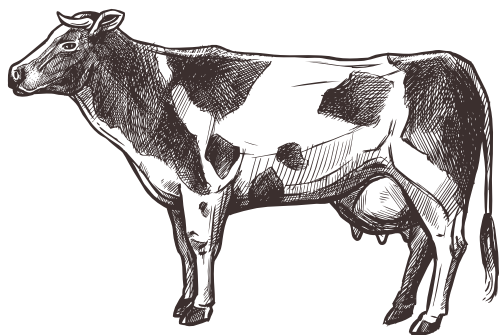


## West Enderby Farm Knows Carrots

There's no rest for the carrot farmers at West Enderby Farm, but they've developed some pretty great systems to grow efficiently. Read more on *page 8*.

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## Ever Wondered How Organic Standards are Developed?

Mosey over to *page 26* where Rebecca Kneen and Tristan Banwell walk you through the community efforts that bring organic to life.

## BC Organic Grower

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**On the Cover:** Hilling carrots at West Enderby Farm. Credit: West Enderby Farm.

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# Editor's Note

By Darcy Smith

Agriculture has shifted significantly over the last century, and while industrial agriculture has come to dominate the sector, the organic movement has been evolving alongside. In the past few decades, like an underground stream bubbling to the surface, organic farming has made a big impact. Changing what people put on their plate—giving them a choice—is changing the way we all think about food and farming.



Organic has gone mainstream, and integrity is at the heart of organic's growing appeal. When people choose organic, they're choosing not just that vibrant, tasty carrot. They're choosing the principles and philosophies behind the organic system. They're choosing the trust they have in organic farmers to care for their health, and for ecosystems.

This issue of the BC Organic Grower kicks off our 2020 series on the Future of Organics by looking at how organic farmers and food producers are living up to that trust: organic integrity.

As Paddy Doherty puts in in this issue's Organic Story (page 8), organic may just be 2% of the agri-food sector, but that 2% has a lot of power. Paddy and Elaine have built a business around carrots at West Enderby Farm, and have contributed more than their share to building BC's organic sector. COABC celebrates 27 years in 2020, and last year was the 10th anniversary of Canada's national organic regulation, and it's thanks to so many people like Paddy and Elaine who got involved 30 years ago and have been growing BC's organic community ever since—and to all the new voices who have joined in the conversation in recent years.

We love to showcase all the amazing things that strengthen the organic sector each issue. Be sure to read all about what's cooking for the #BCOrganic2020 conference on page 12—and get your early bird tickets while they're available. This issue's Newspanch shows you what COABC has been up to over the last few months, from Ag Day in Victoria to the Organic Summit in Ottawa, plus program updates and a message of gratitude from COABC to Jen Gamble for her amazing leadership over the last decade. I've loved working with Jen and am so thankful myself for her guidance, support, and deep knowledge of the organic sector.

These pages, I confess, are full of alphabet soup. While COABC Co-President Heather Stretch may have promised to steer clear of acronyms at the close of last year's conference, I made no such guarantee! You can't talk about organic integrity without mentioning all the organizations that play a role, from regional CBs to the national and international stage, each with their own set of acronyms. Consider yourselves warned, but bear with it! There's so much good information to dig into, from a primer on Organic 3.0 (page 6), to a look at how we are growing into the future of organics from IOPA on page 11 (see, it's already starting).

In her fourth Biodynamic Farm Story installment (page 16), Anna Helmer peeks behind the wall at some serious biodynamic woo-woo that somehow works no matter how hard she tries not to understand it (without using a single acronym!). At Hope Farm Organics, Andrew Adams has managed to make record keeping efficient and easy. What's the secret? His record keeping tell-all is on page 18 (with only a few acronyms).

In Footnotes, Marjorie Harris takes us on a trip through the supply chain, highlighting how essential it is to maintaining organic integrity (page 20). Organic Industry Specialist Karina Sakalauskas gives an update on the Organic Certification Regulation on page 24.

A big thank you to Rebecca Kneen and Tristan Banwell for tackling what's at the heart of organic integrity—our standards. On page 26, Rebecca takes us through the standards review from a bird's eye view: what's it all about, the history and players, and the process behind the review. Tristan follows up with an up close and personal look at his experience participating in the standards review process on page 28. It's a big task maintaining the integrity of the standards while ensuring they evolve into the future—and both Tristan and Rebecca hope you'll get involved! 🌿

If you have a story to tell about organic food and farming, please get in touch. Reach out with your thoughts, letters, and story ideas to [editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)—and be sure to visit us online at [bcorganicgrower.ca](http://bcorganicgrower.ca).



[bcorganicgrower.ca](http://bcorganicgrower.ca)





## Thank You, Jen Gamble!

By Carmen Wakeling, COABC co-president

By now most of the Organic community has heard the news that Jen Gamble has made a personal and professional development decision and is leaving the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia. As a friend and colleague, I wish Jen all the best in her future. Wherever she lands she will bring a wealth of knowledge, passion and capacity with her.

I wanted to take some time right now though to celebrate the amazing effort and achievements that Jen has seen the organization through. Jen has been with COABC since 2011. When she stepped into the role it was a bit of a tumultuous time at COABC. We were in the middle of a transition to the Canadian Organic Regime (COR) and things were a little bumpy financially. Government funding had been pulled and there were new costs associated with the regime.

There was so much going on and although Jen was new to the job, from where I sat as a non-board member and keen supporter of the organic sector, I saw a young woman navigating challenging waters with poise and grace. Not something just anyone is capable of in our eclectic community.

As Jen continued to work on strengthening the footing on which COABC stood she was able to begin to strategically approach all aspects of the job. She worked on the operations and functionality of the organization and began to develop strong relationships with partners external to



*Clockwise, from top: Paddy Doherty, Carmen Wakeling and Jen Gamble; Jen and Kristy Wiperman at the 2015 BC Organic Conference, and Jen and Rebecca Kneen share a laugh with Michelle Tsutsumi at the BC Organic Conference registration table.*

the organic sector. This included funding partners and government relationships.

When I stepped into the role of president in 2015, I could tell that Jen was very clear on all aspects of the organization and what its goals were. In my time working with Jen she has continued to surprise me with her resilient nature and strategic mind.

We worked through the transition to mandatory organic labelling together starting in 2015, with the program coming into place September 1, 2018. We are one of the first provinces to manage this and it is in large part thanks to the persistence and planning that Jen brought to the table.

Although the words Annual General Meeting may be one of the

things that Jen had the hardest time with, she always showed up with an amazing Annual Report, and ready to answer all the questions board members had for her. I have appreciated her capacity to answer questions succinctly and accurately even under pressure.

Moving forward in 2017, Jen led the charge on an amazing Strategic plan that has set the COABC up for short, medium, and long-term success and has created opportunities for partnerships and projects being undertaken as we speak. The list is impressive and includes the iCertify platform that many of you will begin working with this year. When I look at the strategic plan I am happy to say that most of the projects listed are either in progress, completed, or are in conversation much thanks to Jen.

I will be forever grateful for all that Jen has provided to the COABC and want to say thanks so much for everything! All the best in your future full of opportunities.

## New COABC ED!

As most of you are probably aware, COABC has been conducting a search for a new Executive Director. We are grateful to Jen Gamble for giving us plenty of notice and assisting us through this process. Under her leadership, COABC can make this transition smoothly and not lose the momentum we have been building for BC Organics.

The board formed a strong transition committee and conducted a thorough search. Following that process, it was very clear that the best candidate was someone within our own community.

We are delighted to inform you that Eva-Lena Lang will be our new Executive Director! Eva-Lena is very familiar with the COABC. She has filled several roles with us over the years including, most recently, Operations Manager. Jen and Eva-Lena will be working together through January and February, with Eva-Lena taking over the role at the end of February.

## iCertify: Launching 2020

COABC is launching iCertify, a new online organic certification system in early 2020.

This user-friendly, secure online system will streamline the organic certification process, making it easier to apply for a new certification or submit a renewal.

iCertify will assist with much of the administrative work-

load involved with tracking and reviewing information for organic management verification. It will also introduce some key efficiencies through new features and premade records that will save time for everyone including operators, administrators, inspectors and certification committee members.

Stay tuned for more information, including training opportunities and resources in early 2020. Don't miss any important updates! Bookmark the iCertify webpage here:

[certifiedorganic.bc.ca/OrganicOnlineSystem.php](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/OrganicOnlineSystem.php)

and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at @coabccanada

In the meantime, you can take a sneak peek at the new system here:

[youtu.be/d2lxKntQWSM](https://youtu.be/d2lxKntQWSM)

Questions? Thoughts? Contact us at [info@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:info@certifiedorganic.bc.ca).

Special thanks to everyone who has played a role in testing and trialing the system to date. We look forward to rolling it out in early 2020.

*Funding for this project has been provided by the Governments of Canada and British Columbia through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The program is delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.*

## COABC Goes to Ottawa!

COABC's Executive Director, Jen Gamble, was in Ottawa on November 18 and 19 for the Canada Organic Trade Association's Organic Summit. This annu-

al two-day event offers an opportunity to learn what's going on in Canada's organic sector and network with industry members via presentations, roundtable discussions, and workshops.

This year's theme was "Organic is part of the Solution," which delved into the United Nations' sustainable development goals and the link to organic. To bring the theme to life, COTA partnered with Dutch organic specialist Eosta to dig deeper into the new report, Organic Agriculture and the Sustainable Development Goals:

[eosta.com/en/news/sustainable-development-goals-and-the-link-to-organic](https://eosta.com/en/news/sustainable-development-goals-and-the-link-to-organic)

Here are a few highlights from the event:

Dag Falck, President of COTA, spoke about Organic 3.0 and the need for clarity and balance in the messaging. The organic sector is in a position to share the learnings of 30+ years' experience to widen the impact of organic practices and encourage those not yet certified to adopt sustainable practices. Keep an eye out for Dag as the keynote of the upcoming BC Organic Conference!

Andy Hammermeister from the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (OACC) made the connection between organic agriculture and Sustainable Development Goal 6: Water.

Statistics Canada representatives presented the new data they've been able to collect on the organic fruit and vegetable sector and how these numbers can help the organic sector leverage government funding.

*Continued on page 30...*

# Organic Agriculture 3.0

## History of the Debate About the Future of Agriculture

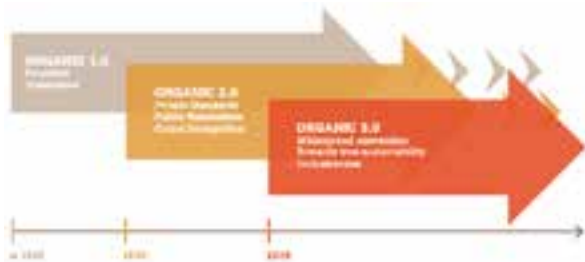


Fig.1 Evolution of the organic movement (Source Arbenz et al., 2016)

By Thorsten Arnold

*This article was first published by the Organic Council of Ontario on January 18, 2019, and is reprinted here with gratitude.*

The organic farm and food industry is facing major challenges. IFOAM, the international federation of organic agriculture movements, is spearheading a debate on how the organic movement can tackle these in the future. This blog summarizes the history of this debate and some questions of interest for Canada.

In 2015, Europe’s major organic farmer associations identified major challenges, with ongoing relevance for the present. Most importantly, the growth in organic production has been slow and farm conversion to organic practices are stagnating. Even if the current growth of 5% per year is sustained until 2050, the organizations concluded that the impacts of organic agriculture would remain insignificant with respect to the movement’s goal of reducing the adverse impacts of agriculture on the planet’s ecosystem and resource base. The organizations also identified several structural barriers within and outside of the organic sector, and posed the question, what could the next development phase of organic agriculture, coined Organic 3.0, look like?

Organic agriculture is classified into three development stages. Organic 1.0 describes the early period, when farmers responded to the industrialization of farming with a call to respect natural cycles and soil health, and retain a lifestyle that is in tune with nature. This early phase was inspired by Rudolf Steiner’s agricultural courses but also with the warning about “Limits of Growth” by the Club of Rome. Organic 1.0 was characterized by a colorful and incoherent movement that was innovative but failed to link into the mainstream food system. Around 1970, a growing number of unsubstantiated organic/biological/ecological claims increasingly confused consumers and retail traders,

highlighting the need for harmonizing the “organic trademark”. European farmer associations reacted by defining a number of guidelines and private organic standards (e.g. Demeter, Bioland, Naturland, BioSwiss, BioAustria), many of which are popular today. During the early 90s, governments throughout the world adopted national organic standards and equivalence agreements between these. This global harmonization enabled international trade in organic goods and also opened retailers to organic products. The successful shift from ideology to standard-driven production is subsumed as Organic 2.0. Today, private and national standards co-exist in many European countries, with private standards being widely recognized by consumers as more stringent and small-scale, whereas national standards cater to industrial organic production and processing.

IFOAM International did not favour a two-tier system, as many member countries do not share Europe’s history of successful private premium organic standards. In a follow-up paper (Nigli et al., 2015), the authors of Biofach 2015 re-formulate the five challenges of organic agriculture as (1) weak growth in agricultural production, (2) the potential of organic agriculture to provide food security, (3) competition from other sustainability initiatives including greenwashing, (4) transparency and safety in value chains, and (5) the need to improve consumer communication. While authors agree that a two-tier system is not necessary, they voice concern about the organic label losing its leadership claim amongst a multitude of emerging sustainability labels. Authors see the current stagnation of organic growth, and the slow speed of innovation in national standards, as a fundamental threat to the organic movement and its goals.

In 2016, IFOAM responded in a paper that gives direction to Organic 3.0. In recognition that “promoting diversity that lies at the heart of organic and recognizing there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach”, IFOAM identified six features that Organic 3.0 should address (IFOAM 2016, p3).

**Feature #1:** A culture of innovation where traditional and new technologies are regularly re-assessed for their benefits and risk.

**Feature #2:** Continuous improvement towards best practice, for operators along the whole value chain covering the broader dimensions of sustainability.

**Feature #3:** Diverse ways to ensure transparency and integrity, to broaden the uptake of organic agriculture beyond third-party certification;



Fig.2 Toward six features of organic agriculture for true sustainability (Source Arbenz et al., 2016)

**Feature #4:** Inclusiveness of wider sustainability interests through alliances with movements that truly aspire for sustainable food and farming while avoiding ‘greenwashing’;

**Feature #5:** Empowerment from the farm to the final consumer, to recognize the interdependence along the value chain and also on a territorial basis; and

**Feature #6:** True value and cost accounting, to internalize costs and benefits and encourage transparency for consumers and policy-makers.

With some further guidance to different players in the organic movement, IFOAM called upon national and regional associations to fill these features with meaning. Since then, organizations across the globe have engaged in a more focused discussion about the future of organic agriculture.

### What Does the Future of Organic Look Like?

North America’s organic associations remain sceptical about a two-tier approach to the organic label. Still, farmers who strongly exceed the national standards feel insufficiently represented by the organic associations and unable to compete with some of the largest organic production corporations. Next to the Demeter biodynamic certification, there are at least two recent private initiatives that promote premium organic certification. Currently in its piloting phase, the Rodale Institute’s Regenerative Organic Certification (ROC) integrates animal welfare and labour fairness requirements and uses three tiers to reward leadership. Secondly, the Real Organic Project is an “add-on label to USDA certified organic to provide more transparency on these farming practices”. USDA organic certification is a prerequisite to participate in this add-on program. This family farmer-driven project embraces centuries-old organic farming practices along with new scientific knowledge of ecological farming.

In the face of these international developments, Ontario’s organic organizations must respond to the grassroots

emergence of a de-facto two-tier system. This is not only driven by farmers who feel insufficiently represented by the “mainstream” national organic standards, but also by consumer understanding of the organic label. Organic-critical mainstream articles play a major role in consumer perception, such as a recent Toronto Star article “Milked”, which found less-than-expected differences between the milk from a large certified organic brand and conventional milk. Even though the article’s findings were based on misleading and unscientific grounds, it still points to a growing concern from consumers about the differences across the organic sector. How can consumers learn about these differences? And how do we, as part of Ontario’s organic movement, promote the national organic standard without abandoning those innovators that exceed the COS requirements, and strive for further recognition?

Organic 3.0 aspires to build leadership within the organic sector as well as bridges with mainstream agriculture. This means innovating beyond the COS requirements and sharing experiences with the entire agriculture sector. As Prof. Caradonna, U of Victoria, reports, many non-organic farmers are already taking up some of organic’s proven practices: cover cropping, reduced tillage, and smarter crop rotations. How can we strengthen this cross-over to maximize benefits for our shared planet? And, what can the organic sector learn from the innovative non-organic producers, e.g. for no-till field crops? How can the farming sector better generate, accumulate and pass on knowledge that is independent from input vendors, whose advice is biased by self-interest? How can farmers learn from each other to sustain farm profits, healthy people, and our beautiful planet?

*Thorsten Arnold is a member of the Organic 3.0 Task Force of the Organic Value Chain Roundtable. Thorsten also serves on the board of the Organic Council of Ontario and currently works with EFAO as strategic initiatives & fundraising coordinator. Together with his wife Kristine, Thorsten owns Persephone Market Garden.*

#### Further reading:

OCO’S response to Toronto Star’s article Milked:

[organiccouncil.ca/ocos-response-to-toronto-stars-article-milked](https://www.organiccouncil.ca/ocos-response-to-toronto-stars-article-milked)

Organic agriculture is going mainstream, but not the way you think it is:

[theconversation.com/organic-agriculture-is-going-mainstream-but-not-the-way-you-think-it-is-92156](https://theconversation.com/organic-agriculture-is-going-mainstream-but-not-the-way-you-think-it-is-92156)

#### References

Niggli, U., et al. (2015). Towards modern sustainable agriculture with organic farming as the leading model. A discussion document on Organic: 3. Jg., S. 36.  
 Arbenz, M., Gould, D., & Stopes, C. (2016). Organic 3.0 for truly sustainable farming & consumption. 2nd updated edition: IFOAM Organics International: ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/organic3.0\_v.2\_web\_0.pdf.



Organic Stories: Enderby, BC

# WEST ENDERBY FARM

## From Carrots to COR



*Top: Carrot harvest. Lower two images: Details of the carrot harvesting and sorting process. Credit: West Enderby Farm.*

By Darcy Smith

**C**arrots: “hard to grow, but easy to sell,” says Paddy Doherty, who farms at West Enderby Farm with his partner Elaine Spearling. When late November rolls around and most vegetable farmers are finally kicking up their feet for a few moments of rest, Paddy and Elaine’s farm is still a hub of activity. “It’s like having a dairy cow, you never get a break,” jokes Paddy. “You start selling in July and go until April. Farmers are on vacation and we’re still packing carrots three, four days a week.”

“Carrots are very intensive. When you’re not weeding, you’re harvesting or irrigating, no downtime.” But they’re worth it.

In 2011, Paddy and Elaine founded West Enderby Farm in 2011 on a 40-acre former dairy farm. They knew they wanted to pursue a wholesale business model. “We didn’t want to move up to the North Okanagan and immediately start competing with our friends at the Armstrong Farmers’ Market,” Paddy says. “So, we decided to grow a crop to sell to local grocery stores and wholesalers.” And there are never enough carrots to go around.

Plus, back when Paddy was involved in the early days of COABC, he remembers a wholesaler saying, “It’s great that you have broccoli for a month in the summer, but really, winter is our busy season. That’s when people want







*Top: Elaine sorting carrots. Lower two images: Details of the carrot washing process. Credit: West Enderby Farm.*

to buy vegetables and spend more time cooking.” An idea was planted, and decades later, when the pair wanted to relocate to the Okanagan and start farming again, it would bear fruit.

At the time, they didn’t know anyone who sold directly to grocery stores in any volume. It’s always difficult to break into the wholesale market: “you need volume to be able to even talk to them,” Paddy says, but over the last decade, the rise of local and organic food has shifted the marketplace. With consumer demand for local food, retailers are “much more open to the idea of buying from farmers, even though there’s a lot of hassle involved for them,” having to deal with a lot of little farms.

How did West Enderby Farm get a foot in the door, or, rather, a carrot on the shelf? “We needed a decent looking bag, some marketing, a barcode, but mostly we needed to be able to service them for at least six months with sufficient stock,” Paddy says. Today, Paddy and Elaine grow 50-80 tonnes of certified organic carrots a year, along with a handful of other crops, including cauliflower and beets, for the wholesale market.

On the farm, Elaine does the crop planning, soil analysis, and lots of field work, to name just a few. Paddy keeps the machines running and looks after organic inspections. They hire three or four workers over the growing season. Elaine also orders all their seed, and they’re very particular



about quality. A current favourite is Bolero, because it “gets sweeter the longer it’s in storage, grows well and consistently, makes a nice shaped carrot, and has good germination and vigour,” says Paddy. But they’re always on the lookout for new varieties. The downside to Bolero is its brittleness, leading to breakage in machine harvesting and packaging. “Commercially, nobody would grow Bolero if they were any bigger than us.”

Paddy and Elaine both have deep roots in agriculture and BC’s organic community. Elaine has a degree in agricultural botany, and taught organic farming for many years at UBC Farm and in the UK. Today, she sits on the steering committee of the North Okanagan Land to Table Network when she’s not out in the field. Paddy is the President of Pacific Agricultural Society (PACS), a member of the National Organic Value Chain Roundtable, sits on the COABC board, and is a part of the Okanagan Regional Adaptation Working Group for the Climate Action Initiative.

Look back 30 years and Paddy and Elaine were raising sheep in Quesnel, and watching regional certification bodies pop up around the province, with “differing standards, and differing ideals and procedures,” Paddy remembers. “It was quite interesting. The government approached us, and there was a group of aligned certification bodies that came together, that was the initial nucleus of COABC.”

Paddy was volunteering with the Cariboo Organic Producers Association (COPA), and tapped into the provincial movement. “I was always an environmentalist, it’s the way I was raised,” he says. “Organic farming is my way of doing what I believe in as my mode of production.”

At the time, there was new legislation in BC that would allow the development of a provincial regulation around organic. Not everyone was on board with a mandatory label, so they moved forward with a voluntary program in 1992, the BC Certified Organic Program (BCCOP). *[Editor’s note: the Organic Certification Regulation passed in 2018, making certification mandatory for use of the word organic.]*

About helping build the BCCOP, Paddy says, “I guess I enjoyed it, getting people together and getting agreements, and had a talent for it, so I kept going.” As he puts it, “I just hung around and kept on showing up and learning. We were inventing new things, the Ministry of Agriculture helped a lot but we had to invent a lot of it.” Then came the development of Pacific Agricultural Certification Society (PACS). “I learned a lot in that process, starting a commercial CB from scratch and writing a quality manual for that,” he says.

At a national level, in response to an edict from the EU requiring a national regulation to ship organic products to Europe, “fruit growers in BC were very concerned about their access to EU markets.” Paddy led the development of

**“ I do see change, change in production and in the market, towards more sustainable production. What we’ve done with our very strict standard is challenged other types of production to meet our bar.”**


a project to get an organic regulation together in Canada to ensure access to EU markets.

From there, Paddy went on to work with IFOAM, where he “met some really cool people, and traveled, and made relationships that are important to me today,” and with ISEAL as the standards manager, working in the global sustainability standards community. “There’s so much more beyond organic, there’s the Forest Stewardship Council, the Marine Stewardship Council, and a hole pile you haven’t heard of—all trying to save the world in different ways, using this system of consumer pull, and voluntary standards systems.”

Today, Paddy is busy working on the latest standards review, and leading a project to attempt to solve the problem of a brand name inputs list, as a project of the Organic Value Chain Roundtable. The Roundtable is “a place where leaders of the organic industry can come together to solve problems,” explains Paddy, and it’s been instrumental in bringing together a Canada’s disparate organic movement, from coast to coast, and up and down the value chain, from retailers, to producers, and everyone in between. “It didn’t turn us into one organization, but it definitely helped us focus our energy.”

“Organic may only be 2% of the market,” Paddy says, but “we have come leaps and bounds.” A small market share belies the outsize impact that organic farming has had on agriculture as a whole. “I do see change, change in production and in the market, towards more sustainable production. What we’ve done with our very strict standard is challenged other types of production to meet our bar.”

“As soon as you put organic carrots on the shelf, it shows consumers that they have a choice, and then the non-organic farmers are faced with, ‘How can I differentiate myself?’ It just changes the dynamic. It encourages a move towards more environmentally friendly production.”

Back on the farm, Paddy and Elaine are thinking about what’s next. They’re looking for someone to take over the carrot business, Paddy says, “but I wouldn’t mind growing cauliflower, that does well, we could grow cauliflower in the summer and take the winters off.” 

*Darcy Smith is the editor of the BC Organic Grower, and a big fan of organic farmers. She also manages the BC Land Matching Program delivered by Young Agrarians.*

# Growing into the FUTURE OF ORGANICS

*By the Administrative Director, Islands Organic Producers Association (IOPA)*

The future of organic is on everyone's mind these days, and many conversations have circled around change. Recently, organic growers have been presented with several changes, from organic becoming a protected label to new online tools, which means we've all had to find time to grow (farm pun intended).

The regulation of the organic label last year has moved BC's organic sector from a grassroots movement firmly into the realm of regulations, paper trail transparency, and auditing. Organic Certification has definitely evolved over the last 40 years. While full of positive changes, including a bigger organic sector, consumer demand for organic, and, most importantly, an ever-growing community of organic and food producers, this type of transition can be difficult for people who are conditioned to the founding philosophy of BC's organic grassroots movement.

Although the requirement to follow these regulatory documents in detail can seem daunting and bureaucratic, we should view it as a communal commitment to do our best to identify potential areas where organic integrity may be at risk. The idea is that as an organic community, we want to continually improve our skills and products. But many changes all at once can cause 'change fatigue,' a sense of resignation people feel when faced with too much change, and thus result in decreased commitment.

In addition to the regulation of organic, record keeping skills have been pushed into the spotlight as the transition to digital means it is possible for every last detail to be captured and stored. Operators are being pushed to step up their game and ensure their records contain all the detail required by the regulations to ensure full transparency and accountability.

The introduction of pre-made templates for record keeping is an essential and valuable move to support producers with the demands of record keeping. These helpful, ready-to-use templates are being promoted for use by all Certifying Bodies (CBs) under the COABC umbrella.

If we can all use the same record keeping documents, it will increase consistency amongst BC's organic producers and make the job of Certification Committees (CCs) and

Verification Officers (VOs) more efficient, as they will not have to sift through various record keeping methods and formats. They will become familiar with the specific set of forms and where the information they are trying to find is located. This will also assist members if they need to transfer to a different CB, as the record trail will be the same for both CBs. Above all, record templates will help new members understand which information they are required to keep, and it means they don't have to worry about developing their own records, while simultaneously developing their farming skills.


The online portal (iCertify) is a big change from days of handwritten documents being mailed in to CBs. Many folks have already transitioned to electronic documents over the last few years. Sending multiple files via sometimes-multiple, size-restricted emails can be time consuming and the risk is that file attachments and notes in email messages may not make it into an enterprise's digital files. iCertify will eliminate lost files, as each document uploaded by an operator will be instantly stored securely and indefinitely on COABC's own dedicated server, ready for retrieval by their CB administrator, CC, or VO. It means operators will also have access to all their current and previous application and renewal answers and all previously uploaded documents anytime with the click of a button. This is a future change that will initially require some training and new skills development, but in short order it is bound to make certification easier for everyone involved in the process.

With many changes in the organic sector, we must keep in our minds that our goal, as a community, is to continue to improve organics and make our processes more efficient. We cannot allow change fatigue to hold us back. Instead, we should strive to be adaptive and view future changes in organics as a continual evolution.

We want to maintain the feeling of community with our fellow organic growers, and not allow that connection to get lost in regulatory documents and feelings of scrutiny. We need to hold on to some of our past as we evolve into the future. We cannot forget that people choose to grow organically, not only as a profit seeking initiative, but because they share a belief in the values and philosophies of organic, for the health of ourselves and the world.

*Continued on page 30 ...*

# the FUTURE of ORGANIC



## BC ORGANIC CONFERENCE

# RICHMOND, FEB 28 - MARCH 1, 2020

Register to attend the BC Organic Conference at the Executive Hotel Vancouver Airport in Richmond while early bird tickets are still available!

This year we are celebrating the 27th anniversary of COABC with an eye to discussing the future for our industry and community. Attending our conference provides educational and networking opportunities for new and established farmers, food processors, students, organic professionals, as well as for the general public. It is your chance to visit with the current and future leaders in BC Organic, exchange ideas, eat amazing meals, learn from experts, and return home inspired by our incredible community before the growing season kicks into high gear.

We really hope you can join us to learn and discuss the current realities and future possibilities for BC Organic. Our hope is that we can all look at some of the challenges and get inspired to work on all the exciting opportunities that the future holds.

Join us for our official kick-off to the weekend: Friday evening is our conference reception at 6:30 pm. This year the reception will be held at the Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Richmond campus (a 5-minute drive or 20-minute walk from the Hotel venue). We will receive welcoming

remarks from the COABC executive, as well as from BC's Minister of Agriculture and Agriculture Co-Critic. We will enjoy organic hors d'oeuvres made from locally-sourced ingredients donated by our amazing community of growers. We'll be washing those down with organic wine and our annual Organic Ale Tasting hosted by Crannóg Ales. This is a great opportunity to mingle and exchange ideas with fellow organic folk. Friday night kicks off a busy weekend that never seems to leave enough time for visiting, so we hope to see you there!

Saturday morning will start with Dag Falck presenting our keynote address, BC Organic: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future generously sponsored by Nature's Path. Dag will examine some of the current threats and challenges to Organic Principles, particularly in light of what is happening to erode the organic standards south of the border. He will outline some of the current responses and opportunities globally, such as IFOAM's Organic 3.0, and the emergence of additional certification labeling such as Regenerative Organic Certification. Most importantly, he will conclude by presenting his ideas on the best steps that can be taken to ensure a bright and growing future for BC Organic.

Working with Nature's Path Foods since 2003 has afforded Dag the op-



Dag Falck

portunity to work intimately with many aspects of the organic movement such as regulations, enforcement, supply, and customer interactions. Prior to coming to Nature's Path, Dag was an independent organic inspector for 14 years, auditing all types of farms and processing facilities. He will use his experience from the last 30 years in the organic movement to put the current stage of organic in a long-term context and show how we can keep working towards our goals and make progress towards leaving the earth better.

To register and to stay up-to-date on new conference information as it emerges, visit:

[certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2020](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2020)

## Location & Accommodation

We hope to see you in February! The Executive Hotel Vancouver Airport in Richmond is holding a block of rooms. For reservations, guests may call locally at 604-278-5555 or toll-free at 1-800-663-2878 by quoting the group name Certified Organic Associations of BC or "COABC". There's also an online group code "COABC-85937" for guests to book through their website:

📍 <https://bit.ly/2rNfwHi>

## Silent Auction

Every year our creative community provides an amazing range of items to be auctioned, including: clothing, books, art, food, wine, tools, seeds, accommodation, and much, much more. If you would like to donate an auction item, please do! You can indicate this upon registering; alternatively, you may contact our conference coordinator at [bcorganicconference@gmail.com](mailto:bcorganicconference@gmail.com). Bring items with you to the conference. Auction items will be displayed Saturday afternoon before and during the banquet until bidding closes on Saturday at 9 pm.

## Trade Show

The COABC Trade Show is a great way to showcase your products. We welcome suppliers of approved inputs, seeds, appropriate technology, marketing tools, resource materials, and more! Producers, distributors, retailers, processors, advocacy groups, etc., please book your Trade Show tables online. Check out:

📍 [certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2020/tradeshow.php](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2020/tradeshow.php)

## Saturday Feast

This year the banquet will be held at the Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Richmond campus (a 5-minute drive or 20-minute walk from the hotel venue). We will enjoy locally sourced, certified organic ingredients, followed by music! One of the ways we keep the conference costs affordable is by featuring food donated by

local growers and producers. Please contact Gavin Wright at [bcorganicconference@gmail.com](mailto:bcorganicconference@gmail.com) if you are able to donate. You can also indicate this on your order form and Gavin will be in touch.



## Farm Tours

This year we will feature opportunities to tour two of Metro Vancouver's teaching and research farms. The Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm will offer a tour that focuses on current research and teaching projects that are relevant to the organic community. The KPU Teaching Farm in Richmond will offer a tour to discuss their teaching programs and their experience with transition to organic certification. Details of each tour will be posted on the website at [certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2020/](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2020/). There is no additional cost for the tours, but they do require you to register so that the hosts can get a sense of the numbers.

## Sunday Wrap-Up Session: Plan for the Future

Please plan to stick around for our wrap-up session on Sunday morning, as some of BC's organic leaders will coordinate a discussion to bring together all of the ideas generated from the weekend and discuss them in relation to the COABC Strategic Plan 2018-2023, with an eye to future planning for BC Organic.

## Presentations & Workshops

Dive into our diverse selection of presentations and workshops. We are working hard to provide the most useful and relevant content available, based on feedback from the organic community. We encourage you to learn and connect with others who share your passion for organics at these engaging sessions. Here is a snapshot of this year's presentations



and speakers, with a few more sessions currently in development. Be sure to check the COABC website for Conference 2020 speaker & session details as they emerge.



### Introduction to iCertify, COABC's New Online Organic Certification System

Crystal Arsenault and Corinne Impey Join us for a hands-on session aimed at helping you make the most of iCertify, our new, easy-to-use online organic certification system (coming in early 2020). Bring your laptop!

### Biodynamic 3.0: It's Not as Weird as You Think, and it May Hold Some of the Answers for the Future of Organic Agriculture

Anna Helmer

Can something as over-complicated, mis-understood, and woo-woo as Biodynamics be part of the future of organic farming? Sounds perfect! It is certainly working on our farm: yields are rising, soil is healthy, and the food tastes good. Anna Helmer, who couldn't tell you for certain what her zodiac sign is, makes the case for a farming method she doesn't completely understand but has come to love (check out the latest in her ongoing written journey into Biodynamics in this issue!).

### Indoor Organic: The Present and Future Potential of Organic Greenhouse Production

Peter Doig & Ione Smith

Greenhouse production has been a controversial issue in Canada Organic for many years. Peter will share his

many years of experience developing greenhouse systems for both organic vegetable production and, more recently, organic cannabis production. He will open the floor for a healthy discussion on potential opportunities and challenges of greenhouse production for the future of organic in BC and beyond.



### **Power of the Snout: Regeneration through Rooting**

*Corine Singfield*

When hearing of regenerative grazing, most people think of cattle or to a lesser extent sheep. Free ranging pigs are often raised in wooded areas or in large pens with deep bedding. Pigs, however, are capable of modifying pasture landscapes in ways that other grazing animals can't: they root plants and are indiscriminate eaters. By leveraging their natural behaviours, we can use pigs to plant their own feed and other cover crops while speeding the accumulation of organic matter through processes that are usually performed via mechanical cultivation. We can use them to control pest problems or break new ground. This presentation will discuss the findings of the research in terms of the soil impacts encountered, focusing on bio-diversity. We will briefly touch upon the systems involved (fencing, watering, forage selection, stocking rates, size of pen, times of move) as well as on the management requirements and the economic implications.

### **Organic Research Extension Panel**

A panel of researchers discussing current work being done in alternative agriculture & food research and extension. The goal will be a discussion of what research is needed and how

farmers and practitioners learn best, taking the first steps toward building an effective model of organic research extension for BC.

### **Exploring Future Farmer Training Programs in BC**

*Veronik Campbell, Sarah Clements, Clare Cullen*

A conversation on current training programs for new farmers in BC (What is missing? How can we improve them? What is working and what is not? How are new findings being incorporated into the training programs?). Will include an interactive discussion of current research to identify the essential knowledge and skills that should be included in alternative agriculture educational programming in BC, explore how these skills and knowledge should best be learned and taught in order to effectively prepare new farmers, and develop a resource to guide and support the development of alternative agriculture education programs.

### **Building a Sustainable Vegetable Seed Production System for BC**

*David Catzel*

BC is one of the few regions of the world with optimum growing conditions for a number of vegetable seed crops, yet production is far below their potential. FarmFolk CityFolk, through the BC Seeds Program, has been working with universities, farmers, and industry to help support the development of a thriving seed sector for BC. Activities include a three-acre Research and Education Seed Farm in Abbotsford, seed trials involving over a dozen BC farmers and replicated at the UBC farm hub site, a mobile seed cleaning trailer, seed production field days and other training events, and a series of online business and crop planning tools to support farmers who want to explore seed production. If you are interested in the potential of seed production, curious about the resources and training available, or want to keep informed about the sustainable seed industry in BC, then this session is for you.

### **Improving Organic Vegetable Farm Sustainability through Enhanced Nutrient Management Planning**

*Kira Borden & Amy Noorgard*

Efficiently meeting crop nutrient demand is particularly challenging for organic farmers growing mixed vegetables. This presentation will be an overview of four years of organic amendment experiments and the resulting effects on crops and soils, and how both vegetable production and environmental sustainability can be optimized. The challenges for nutrient management on organic vegetable farms vary widely across regions in British Columbia. These challenges can depend on differences in soils, climate and the availability of nutrient inputs (e.g. compost). Results from two years of on-farm nutrient management trials in three regions, Pemberton, Vancouver Island, and the Fraser Valley, will be shared and the challenges particular in each region, highlighted.

### **How to Apply Organic Nutrient Management Techniques to your Field**

*Sean Smuckler*

A hands-on session to follow up on Kira and Amy's research, designed to help farmers take what was learned through the research and apply it in their own fields, including soil testing and nutrient management planning tools.

### **Organic Small Fruit Production**

*Juli Carillo & Mel Sylvestre*

Report on multi-year research project on organic pest management in berries. General discussion of best practices for organic berry and grape production in BC.

### **Organic Standards Bootcamp**

*COABC Accreditation Board*

This interactive session will include the examination of different scenarios that require examination of the standards and a (fun!) quiz. This session is designed to empower the participants to take ownership of the interpretation of the standard.

## BC Bud: Outdoor Organic Cannabis development

Todd Veri

As a founding member of the Kootenay Outdoor Producer Co-op, Todd will share his experience with Health Canada Licensing, Organic Standards, forming and maintaining a regional multi-stakeholder cooperative, the joys and challenges of growing within the rhythms of nature, and much more. Please bring your questions and discuss all the exciting possibilities for the future of organic cannabis in BC.

## Foodlands Trust

Heather Pritchard

Heather will discuss the work of the Foodlands Cooperative of BC in light of the present and future realities of farming in BC. In partnership with leaders in the agricultural and land trust sectors, the Foodlands Cooperative serves a complementary function to BC's Agricultural Land Reserve by facilitating access to farming and foodlands. The cooperative addresses the problematic rising cost of land

and non-farm uses of foodlands in BC by placing land in trust and ensuring BC's foodlands remain in production.

## In the Works...

The following sessions are still in the process of being fully developed, but you can count on these topics being presented and discussed in some format at the conference:

### BC Agricultural Policy Panel

Discussion of creative adaptations and on-farm industries that have been recently approved. Updates on result of recent consultations on the future of agriculture policy in BC. Discussion of the supports that farmer and farmland owners need, and those that are currently on the table.

### Organic 3.0

A detailed session, following on our Keynote presentation, to get into the meat of IFOAM's Organic 3.0 document and discuss opportunities and challenges for the present and future of Organic in BC.

### Workshop: Practical Entomology for Horticulturalists

looking at samples; discussing pest life cycles and other biology; discuss effective use of trapping for identification and abatement.

### Workshop: Plant Pathology

Photos, slides, and possibly samples of common plant infections; Discussion of prevention.

Stay Tuned for updates on the remaining Guest Speakers and Saturday night musicians via the COABC website:

[certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2020](http://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2020)

Please join and share the Facebook event for [#BCOrganic2020](https://www.facebook.com/BCOrganic2020)

[facebook.com/events/875126122890169](https://www.facebook.com/events/875126122890169)

We look forward to seeing you in February! 🌿

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# biodynamic farm story:

# Peeking Behind the Wall

*This is where the fairies live on this cut-throat, business-like Biodynamic Farm. Credit: Anna Helmer*

By Anna Helmer

**B**efore I get rolling on this, the fourth installment of Biodynamic Farm Story, I need to remind anyone still reading that I am pushing this farming method because I believe in it. It works for the plants, the soil, the farm, the people, and the world. I think it should be in the very thick of the mix at any conversation about the future of farming. Just so we are clear.

In this article, I will approach the odder, less willingly grasped aspects of Biodynamics. I am doing so because you can't write about Biodynamic farming without talking about things like stars, planets, and esoteric life force theories. It's like calling yourself a potato farmer but not growing a red potato. Further elaboration on this metaphor will not be provided.

There is an upside. While I cringe trying to seriously relate certain aspects of Biodynamic practice to skeptical farmers, I absolutely love that there is a farming method such as this one to hold in contrast to mainstream farming practices and the cheap, processed and ubiquitous food that emanates from them. For arguments sake, consider a Biodynamic can of pop. It would cost around \$7,000, there would only be six produced per year, and probably it would be served in an earthenware bowl. The calculation is suspect. I had to account for all the Biodynamic Preparations and the years of using Biodynamic methods that



*Digging up the horns containing BD 500. Credit: Anna Helmer*

would have to be applied to heal the earth from the assault of the chemicals necessary to make the high-fructose corn syrup. I have no idea. I know for certain, however, that the farms from which spring grocery store pop would struggle to produce even close to six other vegetables that could be eaten without processing.

The point, and I think I have one, is that Biodynamic farming offers a charming counterpoint. For every bit of nano-chemical, crop protection, and data science gobbledygook, Biodynamics has planetary conjunctions, compost preparations, and etheric formative forces. Both systems feed people but one is making them fat and sick, the other is not.



I therefore insist that Biodynamic farming is totally legit, notwithstanding the fact that engaging in it requires leaps of faith, suspension of beliefs, and cognitive dissonance. It's as easy as changing your mind. Those devoted to the cycle of soil testing and amending are not expected to cease those activities; they are merely asked to accept that they need to do more to enable their plants to access the infinite energies contained in the universe.

It's secretly super easy to be a Biodynamic farmer. To start the transition, accept that lots of stuff goes on that you don't know about and wouldn't understand anyways. That done, move on to the idea that your plants probably understand the Biodynamic system better than you. Next steps: use the preparations, plan farming activities using the handy calendar provided, fill out your certification application papers, and provide the small fee in a timely fashion. That's all there really is to becoming a Biodynamic farmer.

There is more, and some may wish to do more, and for them there is limitless scope and material available. Speaking for myself, I really have to admit that I find Biodynamic farming fun as long as I don't have to think too hard about it.

As I expected would happen when I began this journey to acquire an understanding of how Biodynamics works, I have crashed hard into a wall of resistance around certain aspects of the practice. This is the same wall that most practical farmers, knowing it is there, avoid by avoiding Biodynamics entirely. I privately thought of it as the Wall of Woo-Woo. This was in error. I bungled through the Wall

“While I cringe trying to seriously relate certain aspects of Biodynamic practice to skeptical farmers, I absolutely love that there is a farming method such as this one to hold in contrast to mainstream farming practices and the cheap, processed and ubiquitous food that emanates from them.”

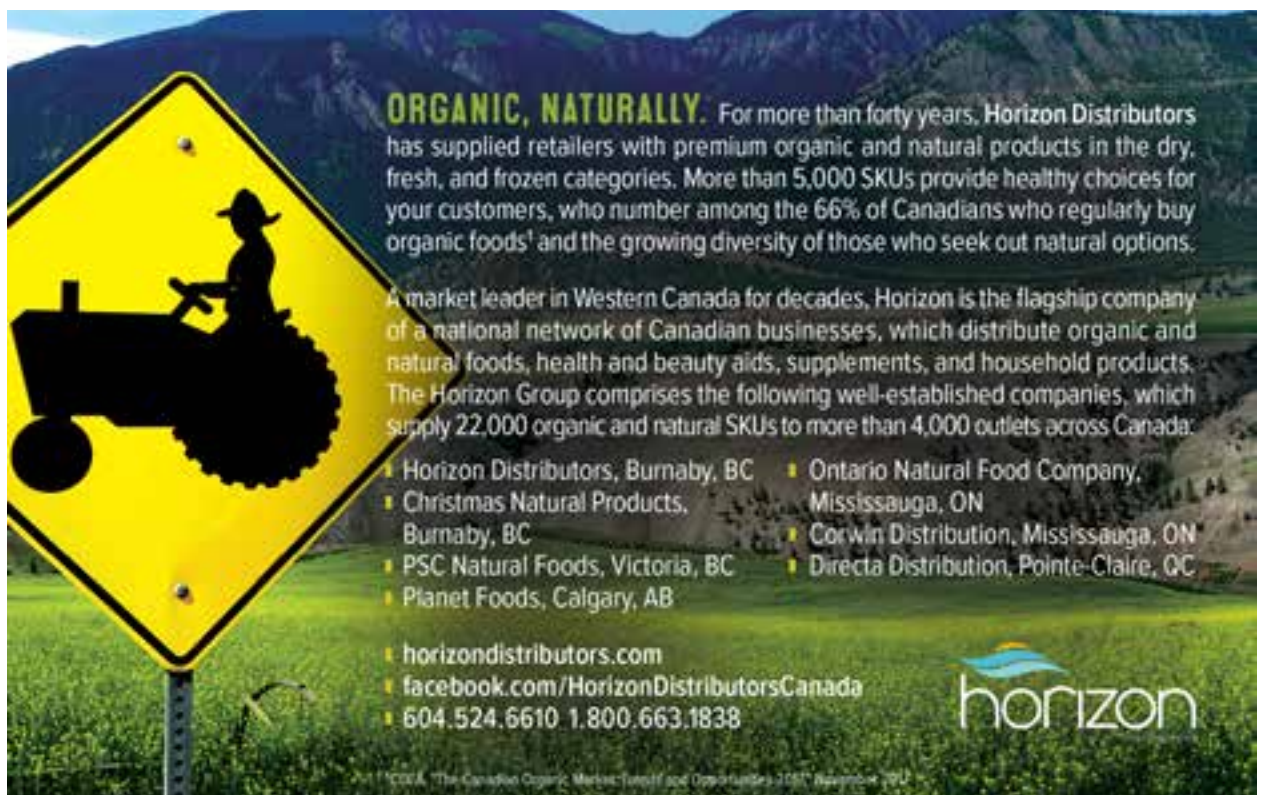
of Woo-Woo some time ago, right around the time I accepted as fact that the regular application of BD preparation 500 works both on the plants (allowing them to access the infinite energies of the universe) and also me (allowing me to understand that it's been working all along whether I believed it or not).

The Wall of Woo-Woo was nothing compared to this one I find myself at right now. I might call this one the Wall of Wacko if I was in private. This is a different wall. It's thicker, taller, and I have not found a way in.

I am not certain I want in.  
I question whether I need in.  
Really, I just don't understand the concepts.

Behind this wall I find the advanced elements of Biodynamics. There are references to other, non-agricultural lec-

*Continued on page 19...*



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A market leader in Western Canada for decades, Horizon is the flagship company of a national network of Canadian businesses, which distribute organic and natural foods, health and beauty aids, supplements, and household products. The Horizon Group comprises the following well-established companies, which supply 22,000 organic and natural SKUs to more than 4,000 outlets across Canada:

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- Directa Distribution, Pointe-Claire, QC
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CCRA, "The Canadian Organic Market: Trends and Opportunities 2011" November 2011



# RECORD KEEPING

## The Secret to Farm Business Success?

By Andrew Adams

As I sit here in my slightly chilly office typing away on the computer, analyzing data from the past year and comparing other years of similar climatic conditions, all I can think is, “How would I be able to make the important business decisions I make each year without the data and evidence to support my hypothesis?”

Aside from the importance of having impeccable records for our organic inspection (Hey, you have to pay your inspector so it’s best to have good records!), the benefits of keeping good records far outweighs the challenges of staying on top of them, especially during the peak of the season in late July early August when the days are as long as are the list of chores.

Organic certification is not just a marketing tool (though some may use it as such). Think of it as a best practices guideline. By adhering to organic record keeping requirements you can make decisions to be proactive instead of reactive in situations that may arise on your operation, whether you’re hit with a pest outbreak or working out nutrient management for a new crop.

This year was a heck of a rainy year across good portions of British Columbia. Thanks to our record keeping, we have data from wet years and years of incredible drought. When the weather man says get your slickers out for the season, we know which crops will thrive in which fields, who can handle wet feet and who can’t—and we plant crops accordingly. Because we know which varieties do best in the varying conditions on our farm, the records lead us through the storm. This ability comes only with time, observational skills and record keeping. Data not only allows us to be more profitable, but also to tread lightly on the land that provides us with so much, which in the end is the most important factor.

In the early years of our farm, I kept a journal with tons of notes of damn near everyday throughout the season. I want to preface this with We’ve been on our property since October of 2011, certified since 2013, and farming full-time for nearly five years. It was a long road to get where we are now and we are still evolving and adapting as all farms should if they are to become or stay viable businesses. In the beginning, our notes were small, choppy details about what was going on, from weather to purchases, etc. I believe this is common for most farmers getting started, and even some seasoned vets.

Seeing my methods from an outside perspective, my beautiful wife (and my biggest cheerleader) suggested I check out the e-book *Record Keeping for Organic Growers* by Canadian Organic Growers (COG)—upon investigating, I found that COG provides free spreadsheets for record keeping. With a little editing, I was able to customize the spreadsheets to my liking and needs. My scattered notes and receipts now became organized, my thoughts and actions became more linear. In the words of Ben Hartman, “I straightened my spaghetti noodle,” thus reducing wasted time.

Taking a lean approach to making record keeping efficient and easy is essential, or you can end up spending more time going over data than you spend pulling weeds from the carrot patch. Reluctantly, I took a stab at looking at how much time I spend writing data down (we used to do in on paper spreadsheets) in our pack station during any “field operation” then in the fall transferring it to an excel spreadsheet. It was several days of simply punching keys—which is not the most glorious part of farming. I also still carried my notebook everywhere just in case. After balancing the time I was spending with paying myself a modest wage for that time, it made sense for me to purchase a tablet, incorporate all the spreadsheets on the tablet, and have it saved in real time to the cloud. We also bought a big fancy WiFi router to get internet across most of the farm so that everyone on the farm could enter data directly.



If something is difficult or abrasive, we don't like to do it. Data collection and records need to be made easy if they are going to happen. Like recycling, if it's a difficult chore, it won't get done. The investment paid for itself that first season in the number of hours I saved transcribing data. With these extra hours, I can place myself in more valuable tasks on the farm—or simply have more family time.

Another great time saver has been Square, the software that we use to take debit, credit and generally do market sales. In the past we would hand tally all products sold at the market and we didn't have the ability to take credit or debit. After seeing how many customers wanted to pay with plastic, and the lost sales due to our inability to accept, we started using Square on our tablet. Not only can we now take plastic payments but Square sets up a cash register and tracks all product sales and what times they sell. Square also allows us to make and send invoice to restaurants that they can pay online, and even reminds them when they are late on payment. All of these sales records are important so that organic inspectors have traceability of all your products, and Square does it for you easy peasy.

If you want to get even more efficient, and spend less time on tracking input purchases, Quickbooks can be synced to your credit or debit card. After you categorize certain purchases, the algorithm will start placing your purchases in categories automatically and can spit out a report at any time. This helps with tax time come end of the season, and tracks your crops profitability in real time. I've yet to use Quickbooks but I will be moving in that direction—every time I save myself the hassle of doing paperwork I can then spend it with my family or doing more valuable tasks on the farm.

I know some records don't really change from year to year but...they might, and your inspector needs to ensure you are being diligent. So, wherever you can, save time, and when you can't, ensure it is time you have allocated as part of your business expense. Keeping diligent records is not something only organic farm businesses have to do, it's what all business must do to be successful. Without good record keeping you are just guessing when it comes to business decisions. Guessing is what weather forecasters do, not successful businesses. Farming is difficult enough of a profession, so give yourself an edge, invest in easy ways to keep records, and make good decisions based on sound logic and not emotion. 🌱

*Andrew Adams farms at Hope Farm Organics with his wife Janie. Andrew has a BSc in Agriculture from Kansas State University and Janie has a BEd. After seeing the state of food security and agriculture in the north the two felt obligated to make real change in the form of organic food production and thus created Hope Farm in 2011.*

... *Biodynamic Farm Story continued from page 17*

tures given by Dr. Steiner in which I have not one whit of interest due to the fact I can't follow the thread of the argument and potatoes are not mentioned once. There is elaborate reference to astrology and astronomy. There are practitioners who seem judgmental and vehemently devoted to doctrine. At least part of the strength of the wall lies in my strongly held pre-conceived notion that it would be impossible to be business-like once through the wall.

But the other day my dad said something that reminded me that there has already been a slight breach. Long story short, visitors to the farm had commented on the good feeling they experienced when walking the fields. Later on, Dad said that it was probably Grandma Anne (his mom, dead these 36 years) communicating from beyond. Huh? He was laughing as he said it, yet quite serious. It reminded me of why we have never cleared that perfectly farmable piece of land in the middle of the field: the same Grandma Anne said there were fairies there.

So. I have a direct relation who probably was totally in to all the stuff I can't get my head around. Perhaps she is behind the wall. A spy, as it were. I might leave it at that. 🌱

*Anna Helmer farms with her friends and family in the Pemberton Valley and continues to resist change and shy away from controversy.*

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# ORGANIC SUPPLY CHAIN INTEGRITY: FIELD TO FORK



Credit: Marjorie Harris

By Marjorie Harris

Organic product integrity, from the farmer’s field to the consumer’s fork, is maintained through an organic product supply chain that identifies critical control points where preventive and protective measures are taken to prevent co-mingling or contamination of the organic product. The organic supply chain’s integrity control points are often designated with signage as a prevention and control measure that follows the organic product through production and handling to the consumer. The organic supply chain is verified for integrity and compliance during the organic inspection.

What are the attributes of organic products whose integrity are being protected throughout the supply chain?

IFOAM’s Four Principles of Organic Productions provides a vision of organic production as a sociologically and ecologically integrated food production system for a healthy planet:

- Principle of Health: Healthy soil, plants, animals, and humans equal a healthy planet;
- Principle of Fairness: Equity, respect, and justice for all living things;
- Principle of Ecology: Emulating and sustaining natural systems; and
- Principle of Care: For the generations to come.

## COR Section 8: Maintaining organic integrity during cleaning, preparation and transportation

*Operators are responsible for maintaining organic integrity at all points of the market supply chain, from production through point of sale to the final consumer.*

Certified organic foods produced following these principles gain these intrinsic philosophical attributes as well as measurable characteristics. The consumer’s confidence in the ability of organic production to provide premium quality foods is directly linked to the consumers positive perception of organic integrity being maintained in all aspects of the organic supply chain.

Here in BC, the 2018 implementation of enforceable provincial regulations governing the use of the label “organic” in the marketplace reinforces positive public perception and confidence in organic foods as premium products. Nationally, the Canadian organic industry has won a strong ally and partner with skills and tools for oversight and monitoring the organic supply chain—as of Jan 15th, 2019, the Canada Organic Regime (COR) regulations are in force as Part 13 of Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR), under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).



*Patty pans packed up for market. Credit: Moss Dance*

## Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association



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- COR options available

For more information, contact  
 Cara Nunn: 250-540-2557  
 simokorganics@gmail.com

CFIA is responsible for the compliance verification and enforcement of Part 13 of SFCR COR regulations. Oversight and management mechanisms include:

- Organic Certification Bodies (CBs) are accredited by Conformity Verification Bodies (CVBs). COABC is a CVB.
- CVBs are designated and audited by CFIA.
- As per Directive 14-01 (see sidebar), organic products are selected at random or by cause for chemical residue testing as part of CFIA's chemical residue monitoring and surveillance programs.
- All pesticide violations in excess of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) are investigated by CFIA.

Directive 14-01 specifies the criteria and timelines for reporting that a CB shall follow when CFIA delivers positive chemical residue results from an organic product. CFIA

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has set the actionable range for CBs from below < 0.01 ppm to above 5% of an applicable MRL for the specified pesticide.

Continued growth in the organic sector relies in part on consumer confidence in the delivery of a chemical residue free organic product. Chemical residue testing and mon-



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itoring of the organic supply chain has intensified as the organic industry has grown and become regulated. Chemical residue testing has become the go-to tool for verifying that organic products are not contaminated. In the global marketplace organic producers are also dealing with the challenges of meeting additional chemical residue rules for private and off-shore organic certification regimes that are operating surveillance and testing programs within Canada.

Signage designating organic production is an important tool that provides risk reduction measures for preventing co-mingling and chemical contamination at critical control points. Here are a few anecdotal examples to illustrate key control points in organic market supply chain from field to fork:

- The buffer zone is a critical control point, providing a “clearly defined and identifiable boundary area that separates an organic production unit from adjacent non-organic areas.” Signage along roadway buffers indicating “No Spray” and “Organic Farm” is often an effective method to alert local weed spray programs not to spray, although mistakes do still occur. One incident involved a well-signed buffer fence for organic livestock pasture. The livestock farmer had posted signs at each field corner post and in between as needed. The district Invasive Weed Program staff somehow sprayed through the buffer zone and a fair distance over the fence into the organic pasture. The farmer’s pregnant livestock were grazing in the pasture at the time and were exposed to the sprays. Unfortunately, this meant the herd had to be decertified and could not be sold as organic. The farmer had an avenue of legal recourse available for financial compensation because the signage was clearly visible on the pasture fence.
- Chemical spray drifts are more likely to deposit residues onto organic fields that are not adequately protected by leafy hedgerows growing in the buffer zone. Some off-shore organic certification regimes hold more restrictive limits on chemical residues and send surveillance teams to take test samples of soil and plant tissues on crops destined for export markets. One farmer learned the hard way that planting thick vegetated buffers are worthwhile for preventing, or at least reducing, spray drift—when his crop tested positive for chemical residues, his contract was nullified.
- Contamination can occur with packaging materials. COR Section 8.1.6 states that “organic product packaging shall: a) maintain organic product quality and integrity.” In one situation, imported berries became contaminated after being packed in conventional cardboard boxes for shipping. The country from which the berries were being imported sprays all cardboard boxes with fungicides as a common agricultural packing procedure. The trace amounts of fungicide left in the box transferred to the

## Directive 14-01 in brief

When a product contains chemical residues in excess of the Maximum Residue Limit, CFIA will follow-up on the non-compliance in addition to the CB.

### 4.1 When chemical residues are detected below < 0.01 ppm:

- the CB shall inform the operator that chemical residues are present
- at the next scheduled inspection, the CB will assess why chemical residues were present and may sample for chemical residues
- deliberate use of prohibited chemicals by an operator shall result in the CB initiating the suspension/cancellation process as per Part 13 of the SFCR

### 4.2 CB actions when chemical residues are detected:

1. **Between 0.01 ppm and 5% of an applicable MRL (inclusive); or**
2. **Between 0.01 ppm and 0.1 ppm if no MRL is specified (inclusive),**

- the CB shall inform the operator that chemical residues are present;
- the CB shall assess why chemical residues were present and shall sample products currently available at the operation or production site for chemical residues no later than the next scheduled inspection. If the affected lot is not available, a different lot should be sampled. If the affected product is not available, a similar product should be sampled;
- if the inspection and sampling indicate continued presence of prohibited chemicals which is not due to deliberate use, the CB shall issue a non-conformity (NC) and request corrective action within a specified time frame;
- if the inspection and sampling indicate deliberate use of prohibited chemicals by an operator, the CB shall initiate suspension/cancellation of the operation as per Part 13 of the SFCR; and
- the CB shall report findings to the CFIA through their CVB by using the CFIA standardized reporting template within 60 working days from the inspection.

### 4.3 CB actions when chemical residues are detected:

1. **Above 5% of an applicable MRL; or**
2. **Above 0.1 ppm if no MRL is specified,**

- the CB shall immediately schedule an inspection and initiate an investigation to determine why chemical residues are present;
- the CB shall conduct additional sampling of products currently available at the operation or production site as part of the investigation. If the affected lot is not available, a different lot should be sampled. If the affected product is not available, a similar product should be sampled; and
- if the inspection and sampling indicate continued presence of prohibited chemicals which is not due to deliberate use, the CB shall issue a non-conformity (NC) and request corrective action within a specified time frame. Products shall lose their organic certification status as per section 7.11.1 (b) of ISO/IEC 17065 if chemical residues are detected above 5% of an applicable MRL OR above 0.1 ppm if no MRL is specified.

berries at detectable levels. Organic packaging needs to be clearly segregated and labeled as organic to prevent packaging mistakes.

- COR speaks to the need for temporary signage to be attached to wagons or trucks to visibly identify a load when at-risk organic crops are being moved between bulk storage bins. A producer who had all of his organic documentation in order was able to be compensated full price for his organic crop when it was discovered to have residues from being comingled at the seed cleaning plant.
- Contamination by chemical residues or plant-derived toxins can occur through a variety of mechanical primary and secondary processes such as cleaning, dehulling, scouring, polishing, pearling, milling, puffing, grinding, and splitting. Even though conventional equipment is cleaned or purged before the organic product is processed, CFIA has found that detectable residues are often transferred to the organic product. It is important for the organic industry to secure dedicated organic equipment to prevent these residue transfers during processing.
- Organic products shall be accompanied by the information specified in COR Section 8.4.2., including the product’s organic status and traceability information. The organic certificate establishes the product’s organic status and is an essential supply chain document. While conducting random surveillance, CFIA purchased imported grain from a grocery store and tested for residues—a shocker, almost two dozen pesticides were detected! Further investigations by the CB revealed that the bulk product had been purchased with solely an invoice stating “organic”. The supporting organic certificate did not accompany the sale. The product was not traceable and was very likely a case of fraudulent product.

The organic market supply chain depends on risk reduction measures to be implemented and actively monitored to prevent contamination and comingling. Everyone benefits when organic integrity is maintained, from the farmer to the final consumer, who can have full confidence in their choice of a premium organic product. 🌿

**Further reading:**

- 🔗 [inspection.gc.ca/food/requirements-and-guidance/organic-products/guidance-documents/directive-14-01/eng/1398462727461/1398462789113](https://inspection.gc.ca/food/requirements-and-guidance/organic-products/guidance-documents/directive-14-01/eng/1398462727461/1398462789113)
- 🔗 [inspection.gc.ca/food/requirements-and-guidance/organic-products/operating-manual/eng/1389199079075/1554143470958?chap=2](https://inspection.gc.ca/food/requirements-and-guidance/organic-products/operating-manual/eng/1389199079075/1554143470958?chap=2)

*Marjorie Harris, BSc, IOIA VO and Organophyte.*




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# PROTECTING ORGANIC INTEGRITY

By Karina Sakalauskas

**W**e, as organic producers, retailers, stakeholders, academia, and government bodies, among others, will shape the future of the organic sector. We must be informed, connected, and vocal about our concerns and suggestions to maintain the integrity of the industry.

## How are we working towards an improved future?

We might begin with a discussion of the new Organic Certification Regulation that came into effect in British Columbia on September 1, 2018. This regulation requires all producers and processors selling food and beverage products marketed in British Columbia as “organic” to be certified through an accredited federal or provincial program. The term “organic” is now a protected label within B.C. The aim of this regulation is to clarify the term “organic” for consumers, stakeholders, producers, and growers.

Previously, BC had a voluntary organic program, meaning operators could get organic certification but were not required to have it in order to make an organic claim. In 2009, the Federal Government adopted Organic Certification for any organic products crossing provincial or international borders. Other provinces, such as Quebec, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Alberta later adopted regulations that protected the use of the term organic for products produced, processed, and marketed within provincial boundaries.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture announced the Organic Certification Regulation in 2015 and provided three years of transition for the sector to come into compliance. During this time, the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture worked closely

with the Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) on education and outreach about organics and the new regulation to support the sector.

## What does this new regulation entail?

Producers and processors must have organic certification from an accredited certification body if they want to make any sort of organic claim on a product, including “grown following organic principles,” or “made with organic ingredients” Claims such as “uncertified organic” or “more than organic” are not permitted. Organic producers, processors, and others in the supply chain who use the ‘organic’ protected label are expected to be able to provide proof of up-to-date certification upon request by a Ministry of Agriculture enforcement officer. Violations under the regulation will result in legal repercussions that could include tickets being issued (\$350 fine) or court prosecutions against the seller.

## What does this mean for the industry?

Greater clarity around what organic means is something consumers in B.C. have been requesting, and the Organic Certification Regulation is significantly contributing to promote and protect consumer confidence in B.C. organic products.

## How do we contribute to the strength of the B.C. Organic sector?

One way we can protect the reputation of the BC Organic label is to ensure we follow the principles of organic integrity. Organic integrity is what separates organic food from non-organic food, referring to the adherence to organic standards at the production level, which must be





All photos: Taken at a KPU event on July 5, 2019. Credit: Karina Sakalauskas.

maintained through handling to the point of final sale, for the final product to be labeled and/or marketed as organic.

### What role does retail play?

Maintaining organic integrity through to retail sale is important. BC and Canada's organic regulations require that the organic integrity of a product is not compromised in any stage of preparation or handling, which includes storing, grading, packing, shipping, marketing, and labeling. Retailer certification improves consumer trust and strengthens the organic label. The Ministry of Agriculture has published guidelines to provide clarity to operators, manufacturers, and retailers in BC on how to be compliant with BC's Organic Certification Regulation.

### How can we sustain this progress?

As an industry, we must continue to work together, learn from our experiences and be open to new perspectives. We must encourage communication between parties in the BC Organic Sector to ensure all groups, small or large, are well represented and have their needs addressed. This industry-wide collaboration helps to maintain organic integrity along the production chain.

### References and resources

You can find out more about BC's amendments to current provincial regulation on our website:

[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-sea-food/animals-and-crops/organic-food-and-beverages](https://www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-sea-food/animals-and-crops/organic-food-and-beverages)

If you have concerns of a business marketing agricultural products using the organic label, without organic certifica-

tion, please contact AgriServiceBC at 1-888-221-7141 or [AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca).

*Karina is the Organic Specialist with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture. She can be reached at [Karina.Sakalauskas@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Karina.Sakalauskas@gov.bc.ca)*

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An illustration featuring three farm-related items: a pig on the left, a radish in the center, and a cow on the right. The pig is shown in profile, facing right. The radish is a large, round root vegetable with a leafy top. The cow is a black and white speckled breed, standing and facing left. The illustration is rendered in a detailed, engraved style.

# Organic Standards: The Process and the Principles

*By Rebecca Kneen, BC board representative to the Organic Federation of Canada*

Once upon a time, we in BC wrote our own organic standards. Those of us with the inclination got together regularly to figure out the problems and decide how best to address them while staying true to our principles. Every year, at the COABC conference, we'd debate all the proposed changes to the standards. Some of us will never forget the epic eight-hour discussions we had about treated posts, and the many-year discussions on poultry standards!

It was a tremendous group effort, and a huge amount of thought and work went into it—and it created the bonds which still hold COABC together.

In 2009, after long discussion throughout the organic community, we collectively decided that a national organic standard was necessary. More and more products labelled as “organic” were coming into Canada, with no verification as to their actual quality or how it would compare to our own standards. Even within Canada, most provinces lacked their own certification regulations. The goal was to create a robust, thoughtful, and ethical standard which could be used to improve the quality and scope of organic production within Canada, and a measurement to accept or reject incoming goods as equivalent organic quality. The BC and Quebec standards formed the basis of the current rules—and the system has been evolving ever since, as techniques, resources, and markets have changed.

Most of us are concerned about the standards themselves—the rules about what, how much, how often. We refer to them when we are looking at such things as a new process, crop input, sanitizer or cleaner, or when we are designing a new livestock barn. We check them right after our annual inspection, when the Verification Officer (VO) references a particular section and we need to understand it. Sometimes we read the Q&A when the E-News comes out and we realize that there might be something that affects our farm. What we mostly DON'T do is think about how these stan-

dards are created and who's involved—unless we think a new decision is wrong. In order to understand why certain decisions are made, we need to understand the structure, membership, and pressures in the organic system.

So, who is it that is looking after the standards? What pressures do they operate under, who's the boss, and how do we make sure that our standards embody the ethics and values that created the organic idea in the first place? This is where we get to play the acronym game.

The Canada Organic Regime (COR) is the system of organic certification. It has two parts: enforcement and regulation. The entire system is part of the “Safe Food for Canadians” act, and is enforced by (in descending order): the Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the Conformity Verification Bodies (CVB) like COABC's Accreditation Board, and finally Certifying Bodies (members of COABC such as NOAA, FVOPA or the for-profit CBs such as Eco-Cert). The regulations apply to any product that moves between provinces or internationally that carries the COR logo.

The Canadian Organic Standards themselves are owned by the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) which makes the rules about how frequently the standards must be updated and the process used. The CFIA establishes organic equivalency agreements with other countries (Japan, USA, EU, Switzerland, Costa Rica). The Standards are owned by a government agency but reviewed every five years in collaboration with the organic industry. CGSB staff are not knowledgeable about organic agriculture; they only verify the review process and have nothing to do with the content.

Here's where the rubber meets the road for most of us: the standards writing and review process. The top level of this process is the Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC).

The CFIA created the SIC to resolve conflicts between CBs and producers. The SIC is made up of appointed members from across the organic sector and is managed by the Or-

## Re: Official position of the Canadian Organic sector on Hydroponics being considered in organic

*Excerpts from the full letter:*

“We stand united and unequivocally reject the allowance of hydroponics by the Canada Organic Regime (COR) for sale in Canada and for export to other trading partners. The very notion of being asked to articulate why hydroponics is banned from COR is similar to being asked why we would ban synthetic pesticides, genetically engineered seeds and have built humane treatment of animals into the organic standards.

The global definition of organic (despite the USA’s National Organic Program recent ruling permitting hydroponics) prohibits hydroponics. In fact, there is a court hearing challenging the NOP’s permittance of hydroponics currently in the US court system as the USDA’s allowance of hydroponics is a fundamental shift away from the global norms of what is defined as organic. We fully support and stand behind the organic sector in the USA who is challenging the NOP/USDA for allowing this egregious act.

The organic sector is a \$5.4 billion market in Canada, with over a billion in export sales worldwide. The USA’s NOP hydroponic products are banned from all export sales due to not meeting international standards. We stand united in that we do not want any US hydroponically produced products entering Canada and lowering the public trust that we have worked to establish in Canada. We also do not accept or support the Canadian Horticulture Canada (CHC) and the Ontario Greenhouse Growers position that there is a trade harmonization concern.

Our Canadian organic standards and US-Canada Equivalency Arrangement is absolutely clear that operators must adhere to Canadian standards and respect the details of the equivalency arrangement. The system has been set up banning hydroponics since 2009, calling out critical variances in our US- Canada Equivalency arrangement. It is of utmost concern if the Government of Canada wishes to alter the established organic standards and trade arrangement details that the organic sector has been functioning under (and strongly support). Amending the Canadian organic standard (or other mechanisms available to government) to permit organics to be produced through hydroponic methods would not only damage the trust and reputation of the Canadian organic label, but also override the research and decision reached by the Organic Agriculture Technical Committee. Any changes to current practises made without the consensus of the Technical Committee would be a breach of the consensual principles embedded in the policies and procedures of the Canadian General Standard Board.

Our concern is that we risk retaining our respected global position in the organic marketplace and that significant trading partners, such as EU, Japan, Switzerland, would need to alter the equivalency arrangements we have with these markets should hydroponics in the organic system be permitted under any circumstances in Canada. With the court case ongoing in the USA, we certainly feel it would be detrimental to our sector to allow CHC’s argument of not being able to access the US market opportunity as a worthwhile argument to alter the standards/trade arrangement or create any policies which would change the current practise of banning all hydroponics under the COR. We support the horticulture sector accessing the US market with their conventionally grown produce but we diametrically oppose their position of trying to drag the Canadian organic sectors reputation down to the US’s “lowest common denominator” which is globally rejected and may be overturned through a court process. There is no other country in the world that permits hydroponics in their organic programs and it would be a fatal error to move in this direction for the sake of an opportunistic market opportunity.”

More reading:

🔗 [foodsafetynews.com/2019/02/organic-industry-is-not-giving-hydroponic-growers-a-warm-embrace](https://foodsafetynews.com/2019/02/organic-industry-is-not-giving-hydroponic-growers-a-warm-embrace)

🔗 [centerforfoodsafety.org/files/1\\_16\\_19\\_cfs-hydroponics-petition\\_final\\_11376.pdf](https://centerforfoodsafety.org/files/1_16_19_cfs-hydroponics-petition_final_11376.pdf)

ganic Federation of Canada (OFC). You will have seen the many lists of questions put to the SIC: the answers published on the OFC website are legally enforceable. CBs and producers have to comply with SIC decisions, as per the CFIA Operating Manual. The OFC ensures that SIC members have the required expertise and deep knowledge of a variety of areas of organic agriculture and processing, and provides guidance to the SIC.

The CGSB appoints its own Technical Committee, also made up of industry experts, but in this case, they are selected by the CGSB not by the OFC. This committee has the power to modify the standards, whereas the SIC can only clarify the meaning of the standards. The Technical Committee analyzes recommendations from the SIC and the OFC Working Groups or the public when an amendment or a full review of the standards is launched.

The OFC working groups are made up of volunteers from across the country with expertise in specific areas. There are working groups for livestock, specific crops, and so on. Petitions for changes to the standards are received by the OFC, then brought to the various working groups for discussion, research, and recommendation. The working groups have up to 20 members, all participating in the entire process of reviewing questions and petitions for changes. They are able to do their own research and to share information widely. This is not a secret process!

In previous standards reviews, proposals have been received on a huge range of issues. As an example of how the working group works, one proposal received in the last round requested that the use of non-organic manure be prohibited, another that manure from non-organic sources including confined livestock or stock kept in the dark be permitted. In the first case, the proposal was rejected because there is a large deficit in the supply of organic manure, and such a restriction would create a huge barrier to organic production. In the second case, the proposal was also rejected on the grounds that the petition would weaken the standards and erode public confidence.


There are many areas where this process can be influenced in any direction. The membership of the working groups, technical committee, and SIC itself can be manipulated (intentionally or not). How questions are grouped for presentation to the working groups, and which resources are used will influence the outcome.

The OFC is serious about upholding organic values and principles. In soliciting members for the working groups, we aim for skilful, balanced representation with people whose interests go beyond short-term financial gain. We try to balance technical expertise with breadth of experience, large and small producers, cross-country representation, and commitment to organic principles.

There is a lot of pressure on all parts of the organic industry to allow more money to be made, to loosen regulations so that they are “more accessible”, and to allow foreign influence on our standards. The recent move by the USA to push for Canada to include hydroponics in the organic standards is one example. In this case, the OFC, Canada Organic Growers (COG) and the Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) collectively repudiated this move (see the excerpted letter in this issue of the BCOG). We’re also seeing livestock standards pressured to allow more confinement and less outdoor access, and crop standards pushed to allow indoor growing without natural sunlight. The three national industry groups (OFC, COG, and COTA) are working together to find more ways to inextricably embed our principles into the entire regulation and the processes for amendment.

What this really needs is support from our membership: from you. We need more people to volunteer for the work-

ing groups and the CGSB Technical Committees. We need you to put your expertise and ethics to work for the whole community. You don’t need to be a world-renowned expert, you just need to want to work, learn and do a lot of reading and talking. Most of all, you need to want to support the community that supports you.

Contact Nicole at the Organic Federation of Canada to find out how to volunteer for any of these committees: nicole.boudreau@organicfederation.ca 

Read more:


Organic Federation of Canada:

 [organicfederation.ca](https://www.organicfederation.ca)

Canadian Organic Growers:

 [cog.ca](https://www.cog.ca)

Canada Organic Trade Association:

 [canada-organic.ca/en](https://www.canada-organic.ca/en)

 [organicfederation.ca/sites/documents/OFC%20Communication%20Snapshot%20of%20the%20live%20stock%20wg.docx\\_.pdf](https://www.organicfederation.ca/sites/documents/OFC%20Communication%20Snapshot%20of%20the%20live%20stock%20wg.docx_.pdf)

*Rebecca’s parents led her down the sheep track to food sovereignty and food systems analysis through their Ram’s Horn magazine and Brewster’s many books. She farms and brews in Secwepemc Territory at Left Fields/Crannóg Ales and is COABC’s representative to the Organic Federation of Canada.*

## Standards Review: Behind the Scenes

By Tristan Banwell

**H**ow did I come to be involved in the 2020 Review of the Canadian Organic Standards from my organic outpost near little old Lillooet?

Well, Anne Macey talked me into it, of course. By email. She’s very charming and persuasive, even in text.

I am glad she did recruit me, because I now realize how important the process is. I have also become very familiar with the livestock standards, and I have heard the perspectives of producers from many regions of Canada and all scales of production. It was eye-opening and rewarding (and time-consuming!). I have a deep appreciation and respect for the people at the Organic Federation of Canada who made this process happen. A lot of hard work and organizing goes into this process, and a lot depends on us, the volunteers on the Working Groups.

It’s my turn to talk you into getting involved, or at least convince you to read Rebecca Kneen’s article all the way through so that you know what is going on.

Throughout 2018 and 2019, I volunteered on the Livestock Working Group, and sat on smaller groups called Task Forces for Poultry, Swine, and Ruminants. Many of the participants are producers, some large and some small. Others are inspectors, consultants, agronomists, veterinarians, or employees of various organizations, like the SPCA (or COABC!). I was surprised to find there are also industry group representatives participating on behalf of their constituents, such as the Chicken Farmers of Canada and Egg Farmers of Canada. Each of the Livestock Task Force groups included 8 to 20 individuals, while the Livestock Working Group was comprised of 40 to 60 people. Meetings were two to three hours long by teleconference, with participation on Google Drive for document review and collaborative editing. The Working Group met monthly from September 2018 to April 2019, and again in the winter of 2019/20 to complete the process. Task Forces met an average of three times.

New Task Forces cropped up within the Livestock Working Group to deal with petitions related to Apiculture, Bison, and Rabbits. Members of our working group were also recruited to advise the Genetically Engineered (GE) Task Force, and invited to join the Social Fairness Task Force. Sometimes a petition for another Working Group would come across to Livestock for comment, or seeking the answer to a specific question. But primarily, we got down to work reviewing petitions for changes to the Standards with regard to swine, ruminants, and poultry.

Often, especially when a petition was unrealistic to implement or perceived to weaken the Standards, the groups could quickly reach consensus with a recommendation. I came to appreciate the flexibility of the Standards to apply in so many different contexts, while ensuring a basic set of principles is respected. It is easier to understand the complexity of the Standards when you realize that they are built and revised one particular circumstance at a time.

We also navigated many controversial conversations. What one participant may view as strengthening the Standards may be seen by another as a meaningless change leading to unnecessary expense. Dedicated volunteers gathered and shared research to support their positions and worked over wording repeatedly to solve disagreements. Consensus was sometimes difficult to reach, sometimes impossible. At times, a voting block would solidify and no proposal offered could progress. This was frustrating, but the system is designed to move discussions forward regardless: if a Task Force cannot make a recommendation, the topic goes back to the Livestock Working Group for further consideration. If that still does not help, it's back to the Technical Committee.

After suggested changes go out for public review over the summer, the comments come back to the Working Groups. We must address all comments. In the case of Poultry, so many comments came back that the conveners further divided the Poultry Task Force into a small and nimble

committee that could make recommendations that then returned to the larger group. In the end, our recommended changes to the Canadian Organic Standard will go up to the Technical Committee, who can then accept, revise, or reject the changes. This group will consider not only the recommendation but also the context, and if a topic was highly controversial or many negative comments are received, they should take that into consideration.

I am interested to see how our hard work influences the Canadian Organic Standard, and I know that when the process comes around again, I will step up and put in the time to make my voice heard. I hope that you will too. 🌿

*Tristan Banwell is a founding director of both the BC Small-Scale Meat Producers Association and the Lillooet Agriculture & Food Society, and represents NOOA on the COABC Board. In his spare time, he manages Spray Creek Ranch in Lillooet, operating a Class D abattoir and direct marketing organic beef, pork, chicken, turkey, and eggs. farmer@spraycreek.ca*



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Listen to the full episode:

🔗 [youngagrarians.org/farmer-podcast-club-organics-fight-climate-change](http://youngagrarians.org/farmer-podcast-club-organics-fight-climate-change)

...Newspatch, continued from page 5

One of the most memorable sessions was the discussion on how to bring Social Fairness into the Organic Standard. At the moment it is an information piece, but the hope is that it will become embedded in the standard itself. This has its roots at the COABC conference session when Raul Gatica of the Migrant Workers' Dignity Association gave insight into the plight of migrant workers. From there, Anne Macey wrote a late submission to the standards review process, which will be presented in February at the second meeting of the Technical Committee. Our hope is that the organic sector will become leaders in agriculture on this issue.

### Ag Day in Victoria

Organized by the BC Agriculture Council, Ag Day is a series of scheduled meetings between BC farmers and ranchers, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, senior government officials and other key stakeholders and industry reps. Ag Day began with an evening reception on Monday, October 28th, followed by meetings with government on Tuesday. Jen Gamble, Heather Stretch, and Niklaus Forstbauer were at the event in Victoria representing the COABC and BC's organic sector!

One of the biggest benefits of Ag Day is the connections the

organic reps make throughout the agriculture sector. This year, we, along with the BC Young Farmers, had a great meeting with BC's Minister of Agriculture, Lana Popham. For more info on this year's Ag Day, you can read this news release from the BCAC:

[bcac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-10-29-BC-Farmers-and-Ranchers-Connect-with-Government-in-Victoria.pdf](https://bcac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-10-29-BC-Farmers-and-Ranchers-Connect-with-Government-in-Victoria.pdf)

### Canada Organic Knowledge Sharing

Maureen Loft, Accreditation Director for COABC, attended the annual Canada Organic Regime (COR) Conformity Verification Body (CVB) face-to-face meeting at the Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) Headquarters in Ottawa on November 21 and 22.

This meeting is an opportunity for the CVBs such as COABC and our counterparts across the country to meet with CFIA and to calibrate and share knowledge about the COR and associated standards (Canada Organic Standard CAN-CGSB-32.310-2015, CAN-CGSB-32.311-2015, and the new CAN-CGSB-32.312-2018 for aquaculture).

Specific topics at this meeting included developing a non-compliance and enforcement flow chart that all CFIA designated

CVBs will apply, interpretation and application of the aquaculture standard for aquaculture, and discussion of proposed updates to the COR Operating Manual.

We have also engaged in some exciting collaboration opportunities with the other CVBs to improve and advance the delivery of the COR program, including harmonizing processes and developing tools to improve oversight at the CVB as well as the CB and operator levels. These efforts will build on the work the CFIA has been doing with industry groups and other key stakeholders in the organic industry to enhance the effectiveness and delivery of the COR.


### Standards Review Fundraising Campaign

Revision work on the Canadian Organic Standards is ongoing and has become a source of passion for many, but funding provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada only covered the review activities planned before March 31, 2019. The Organic Federation of Canada is launching a fundraising campaign for the continuation of the revision work—it's one small way you can participate in building a strong organic sector in Canada!

[organicfederation.ca/sites/documents/191029%20InfoBio%20COS%20reveiw%20](https://organicfederation.ca/sites/documents/191029%20InfoBio%20COS%20reveiw%20)

... Growing into the Future, continued from page 11

The beauty we must remember is that we all get to have our say in the ongoing development of the organic standards via the standards review process.

We are still a community. We are just bigger. 

For more on iCertify in this issue of the BC Organic Grower, flip back to the newspatch! And stay tuned for updates at:

[certifiedorganic.bc.ca/OrganicOnlineSystem.php](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/OrganicOnlineSystem.php)

*Islands Organic Producers Association (IOPA): certifying farms on Vancouver Island and Surrounding Islands since 1990.*

[iopa.ca](https://iopa.ca)

*Funding for iCertify has been provided by the Governments of Canada and British Columbia through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The program is delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.*

## ORDER FORM

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Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Province: \_\_\_\_\_

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Certification Body & No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Ordered: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Required: \_\_\_\_\_

PST Exemption (for packaging materials)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 1: PST Number: _____ Business Number: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 2: Certificate of Exemption: <a href="#">FIN 490</a>

Item	Units	Unit Price	Quantity Discount	Quantity	Total
Stickers 1" round	1000 pc roll	\$13.50	10 rolls \$120.00		
Stickers 1 1/4" square	1000 pc roll	\$13.50	10 rolls \$120.00		
Twist Ties 10" (15,000 per case)	1000 pc	\$13.00	Full Case-\$165.00		

The packaging materials above are only available to COABC Certified Organic members and are PST exempt for qualifying enterprises (see above).

Have you signed a Consent to use Official Marks Declaration Form (July 2006 revision)? Y/N Are you Certified? Y/N

With which products will you be using the packaging materials? \_\_\_\_\_

Promo Materials: available to everyone	Member \$	Non-member \$	Tax		
Bucket Hats size M or L *	\$15.75	\$15.75	PST taxable		
Ball Caps	\$13.10	\$13.10	PST taxable		
Natural T-shirts (Plain) S * or XXL	\$5.00	\$5.00	PST taxable		
<b>NEW!! COABC T-shirts</b> Designed by Brian MacIsaac Men's size S-XXL & Ladies sizes S-L	\$17.85	\$17.85	PST taxable		
Organic Tree Fruit Management	\$19.95	\$25.95	No PST		
Sub-total (before taxes and shipping):					

\*Limited quantities available - please contact the COABC office for availability

GST # 887782431

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Minimum charge of \$10.00 per order for any promo and/or packaging materials

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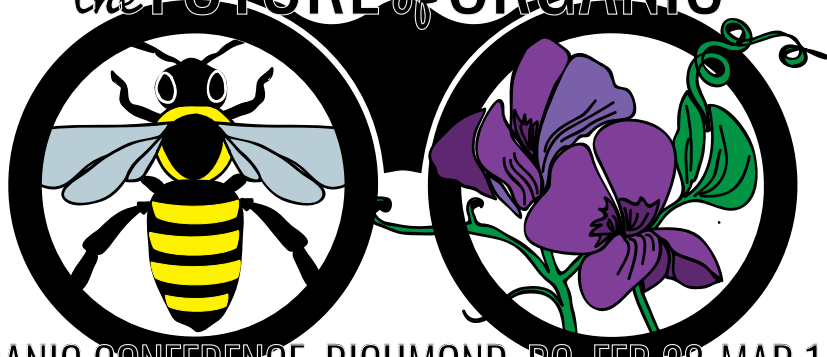
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